

SCED speaks on regulation of travel agents receiving Mainland tour groups

Following is the transcript of remarks (English portion) by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mrs Rita Lau, at a media session at the West Wing lobby, Central Government Offices today (February 7):

Reporter: Now that the CCTV Beijing has voiced the displeasure about the problem of forced shopping in Hong Kong, do you think it is a clear case that Hong Kong Government is not doing enough in previous times to tackle such issue and what actually can Hong Kong Government do?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: The issue of receiving Mainland tour groups into Hong Kong forms part of a very important industry which drives and supports Hong Kong's economic well being. And of course we would expect our tour guides to display the highest professional standard in their reception. Indeed, one of the measures recently introduced and enforced by the TIC (Travel Industry Council), which is taking effect on February 1, includes a very clear prohibition against any forced shopping activities. Should there be any of such incidents, these should be reported and it will be acted on very vigilantly by the TIC.

Reporter: Has the existing case seriously affected the reputation and image of tourism in Hong Kong?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: We cannot tolerate even a single incident of any of the breaches committed by any of the travel agents. It is our common objective to try to develop a tourism industry which will continue to prosper and sustain Hong Kong's good reputation as a premier destination for our tourists.

Reporter: But has it actually affected Hong Kong's reputation?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: Obviously any incidents involving any conflicts between tour guides and any members of the tour groups need to be investigated fully to establish the fact. I would like to think that considering the great numbers of tourists coming to Hong Kong, and the fact that we will very seriously conduct an investigation into this matter, we will send a very strong signal to the industry as well as to all tourists to assure them and to inspire their confidence in the Government and the regulatory body, and in our great determination to stamp out any such malpractices.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

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